

CORRESPONDENCE

Birth Control Information

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*.

SIR,—In the *EUGENICS REVIEW* for October your comparison of Great Britain and Mysore in the matter of public action regarding contraception is happily no longer true.

In July the Minister of Health forwarded to the Committee responsible for the Conference on Public Health Authorities and information on Birth Control held in April, a memorandum M.C.W. 153, given in full on page 32 of the enclosed report.* Even in the short time since July twelve Public Health Authorities, as given on page 33, are taking action. What is now required is that Public Health Authorities should use their powers and thus make contraception a part of maternal health practice.

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Negative Eugenics

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—Both your Editorial comment in the July, and Dr. Dunlop's letter in the October, Number, convince me that the remark in my article on "Eugenics as a Moral Ideal" that "negative eugenics is powerless to *improve* the human race and to lift human life to a higher level" demands rather more elucidation than I gave to it. Now, it is, of course, easy to understand that if in a very mixed society a process of weeding out the incompetents, morons, unfit, and diseased is instituted, the *average* of capacity, intelligence and health will rise; for the weaklings will be weeded out. To this extent, then, and in this sense, improvement will occur. But it does not follow that by this process the peaks of human attainment will actually be raised. There may ensue a golden age of mediocrity, in which a moderate degree of health and fitness will be universal, and approximating much more nearly than now to human equality, but showing no tendency to any higher developments. Whether these latter will be facilitated will depend on a further natural selection favouring ability and encouraging its reproduction. This need not occur, will not occur spontaneously (as Dr. Dunlop assumes), and it may even be unlikely to occur, if the dominant sentiment in a society is 'democratic' and not 'aristocratic.' But it could, of course, be made to occur by appropriate measures of 'positive' eugenics. These would, naturally,

aim at conserving and multiplying the cases of superior endowments which would presumably continue to crop up as what Darwinism calls 'accidental variations.' As yet civilized societies have given little thought to the question what variations are valuable and ought to be fostered, and have allowed to grow up many institutions which have a blighting effect on most of the ability which 'takes birth' in a civilized society. It is demonstrable that most of these blighting influences are a by-product of civilization, and could be counteracted.

This brings me to the great fact which Dr. Dunlop stresses, viz. that somehow man's ancestors *did* manage to progress. I quite admit this fact, though I think Dr. Dunlop rather begs the question and is deceived by the double sense of 'improvement' when he assumes that the progress which occurred should be credited to natural selection. Natural selection by itself is merely eliminative, and not creative. It cannot explain progress, the advance to higher levels, though it provides the mechanism by which the unfitted to survive are disposed of. To explain *progress* we must look to 'accidental variations.' And a scheme of *positive* eugenics is needed to foster them when they have arrived.

F. C. S. SCHILLER.

Birth Control Investigation Committee

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—In the spring of 1927 a Committee was founded under the Chairmanship of Sir Humphry Rolleston to inquire into the effects upon the health and happiness of married people of existing contraceptive practices. The Committee has also conducted research with a view to discovering simpler and more practicable methods whose social effects will be less dysgenic than are those of the practice of existing methods. The investigation is being carried out by statistical and laboratory methods under the auspices of Statistics and Research Sub-Committees.

In order to obtain material upon which to base its statistical investigations the Committee has produced a questionnaire which is intended for use by married women. Questions are asked which will throw light upon how reliable, practicable, æsthetically objectionable and harmful (or otherwise) are the various methods now prevalently used when compared with one another.

The questionnaire is not to be signed, and the identity of persons filling it in is not revealed. This investigation is of great eugenic interest, and the co-operation of all readers of

* This report is here dealt with on page 307.—Ed.